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## A Series of Sculptures

John Redman  
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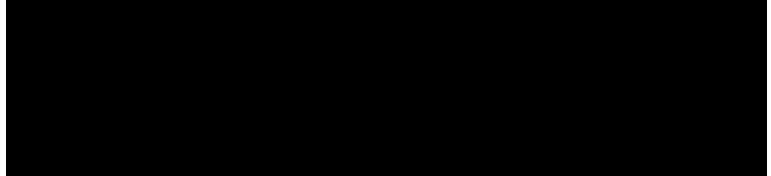
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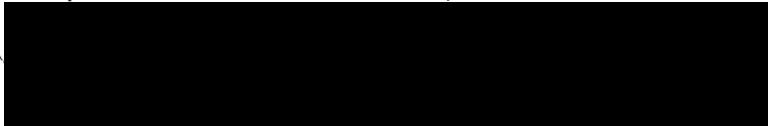
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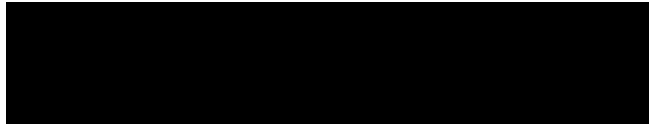
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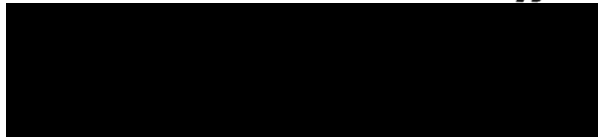
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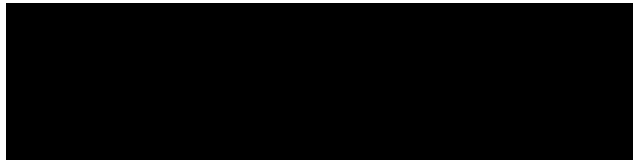
Frederic Littman



Claire Kelly



Robert Kasai



William Blue

A Description and Analysis of Sculptures completed  
during the last year of the MFA Program, and presented  
in public showing April 1-23, 1976.

A SERIES OF SCULPTURES

by

John Redman

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS


in

SCULPTURE

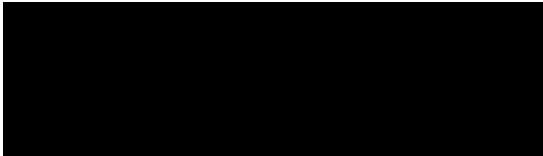
Portland State University  
1976


TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

The members of the Committee approve the thesis  
of John Redman presented May 21, 1976.

  
James Hansen, Chairman

  
Frederic Littman

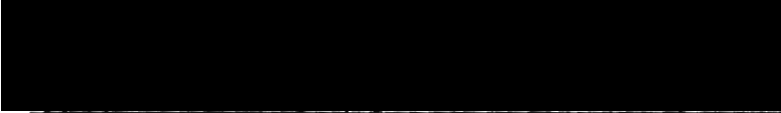
  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

My natural inclination is towards organic forms. During the first year of the MFA program and also while an undergraduate, my method of working was primarily a creative-intuitive one. I do not usually work from a sketch, rather I let the clay and the first forms tell me what is to follow, or at least try to be sensitive and "listen". When I am totally involved in working on a piece in clay, I have a feeling that there is a life-form that already invisibly exists and I am merely putting a visible skin around it.

One piece in particular gave me this sensation. Fig 1. "Coiled Form" started out on an armature approximately five inches high, and I soon felt a definite magic about it to the point where the forms seemed to happen of their own accord. I worked on it, off and on, for approximately five months. It kept growing until it swelled to nearly 300 pounds of clay and had to be terminated before collapsing the sculpture stand. After the first session, working on it became more difficult and frustrating. I started talking to it as if it were alive: some weird organism that was compelling me to feed it with clay so it could



Figure 1. "COILED FORM" H. 16"



have physical reality. The final piece was a compromise with the physical problems involved, time, and my own frustration. I have a feeling that it could never be finished, but would continue to grow, much like a spiral sea shell.

The problems involved in doing the "Coiled Form" are the same-albeit exaggerated - that occur in all my work that is done intuitively. I'm sure this was a factor in my deciding to work in a more designed and conceptual manner during the second year of the MFA program. In addition I found myself becoming interested in eroticism as a basic life-force and a form-inspiration. I also became interested in the use of repeated or multiple forms.

When nearly identical forms are grouped in some arrangement they take on a group identity that differs from the individual, and imply some intelligent design. Sometimes, however, the reason for grouping is unclear and may cause a feeling of strangeness or mystery.

Trojan Plant #1" was the first piece done using this approach, or perhaps it preceded the idea; in any case, it became the germinal seed for many of the second year sculptures.

Organic growth, eroticism, and multiple forms: these are the main themes of my sculpture; and veiling all the works is the aura of the strange.

## CHAPTER II

### MEDIA AND TECHNIQUES

Polyester resin was used as the final medium for all the sculptures in the thesis project. Polyester resin is a low viscosity liquid which when mixed with a catalyst-(methyl-ethyl ketone peroxide), hardens or "cures" to a hard, brittle solid. Various colorants can be mixed into the resin before catalyzing to produce any color desired. It may be advantageous to add a filler when increased viscosity would aid workability - when brushing resin on vertical surfaces, for instance. Common talc seems to work quite well for this purpose.

The resin and catalyst are toxic liquids so contact with them or their vapors must be avoided. This means having continuous ventilation of the work area, wearing rubber gloves, and using a respirator mask with a suitable filter for organic vapors. Glasses, goggles, or a safety shield should be worn to protect the eyes from any splashing.

Resin is a versatile material quite suited for sculpture as it can be cast or applied in several ways: cast solid, laminated, sprayed, or hollow cast. The latter method involves casting around a solid core after wax has been melted out - essentially the same process as lost-wax bronze casting. Parts of

the sculpture may be resinated separately and joined later in the final piece. Ease of joining and patching is one of resin's advantages. Surface finishing is accomplished using normal hand and machine tools, sandpaper, and steel wool - mirror surfaces can be obtained if desired.

Some kind of reinforcing may be necessary since resin is very brittle. Fiberglass, burlap, steel mesh, and wood or steel rod are some possible reinforcing materials. In the case of hollow forms, the core material can be left in for strength or, if no core is present or light weight is a criteria, a polyurethane foam core can be poured in as reinforcing material.

The sculptures themselves are usually conceived in clay or plaster. A wood or steel armature is made and the clay or plaster applied over it. After the forms have been resolved, a plaster piece mold is made from the original plaster or clay. The mold is removed in sections and reassembled. A layer of wax is then cast inside the mold and the mold disassembled, leaving a hollow wax casting of the original. At this point the forms in wax can be further refined or clarified if necessary.

Next, a plaster waste mold is poured over the wax. If a core is to be used, core pins would be inserted prior to pouring the waste mold. After the

mold has dried, it is placed in an oven at 250-degrees F until the wax melts out. When the mold has cooled, it must be treated so the resin will not adhere to it. Paste wax can be used as a parting agent or liquid latex can be brushed on, or poured in and out of the mold. When dry, the latex forms a thin flexible layer that seals the mold surface. Resin can now be poured or brushed into the mold.

When the desired wall thickness is attained, the waste mold is chipped away, exposing the final resin sculpture. The piece is now ready for cleaning and final finishing, assuming things went as planned. Otherwise, patching and repairing are done before finishing.

When the piece is finished, it is sprayed with two or three coats of clear acrylic lacquer, then waxed and polished.

### CHAPTER III

#### DISCUSSION OF SCULPTURES

"Trojan Plant #1" was the first piece utilizing multiple forms grouped in an arrangement. Fig 2. The contrast between the severe box form and the phallus forms creates an ambiguity while the uniform color and material pull them together. The phallus forms no longer act as phalli but take on a group identity and function as a unit. The piece seems to work in other positions, although its character changes and, in effect, it become a new piece. Fig 3. In figure 3 it is now a strange box-creature skittering across the floor-looking for the rest of its centipede body. Its black color adds a certain sinister feeling to it, as if it could be dangerous.

"Trojan Plant #2" followed as an exploration of color and arrangement Fig 4. My intention was to deal with a sequential event showing various stages in the growth of the forms, much like green seedlings growing from the soil, eventually to be cut. Here, the growth forms are intended to be separate from, but growing out of the white solid. This piece is unique from the other in its implication of events occurring in time.

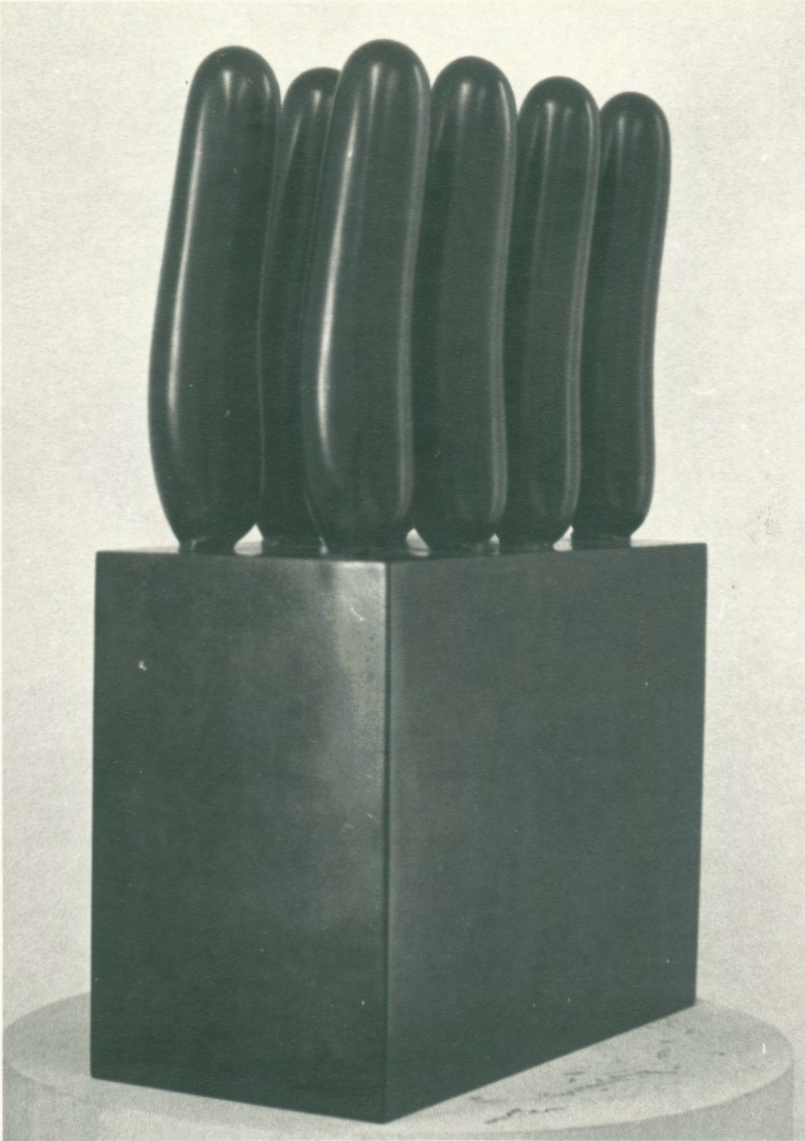


Figure 2. "TROJAN PLANT #1" H. 18"



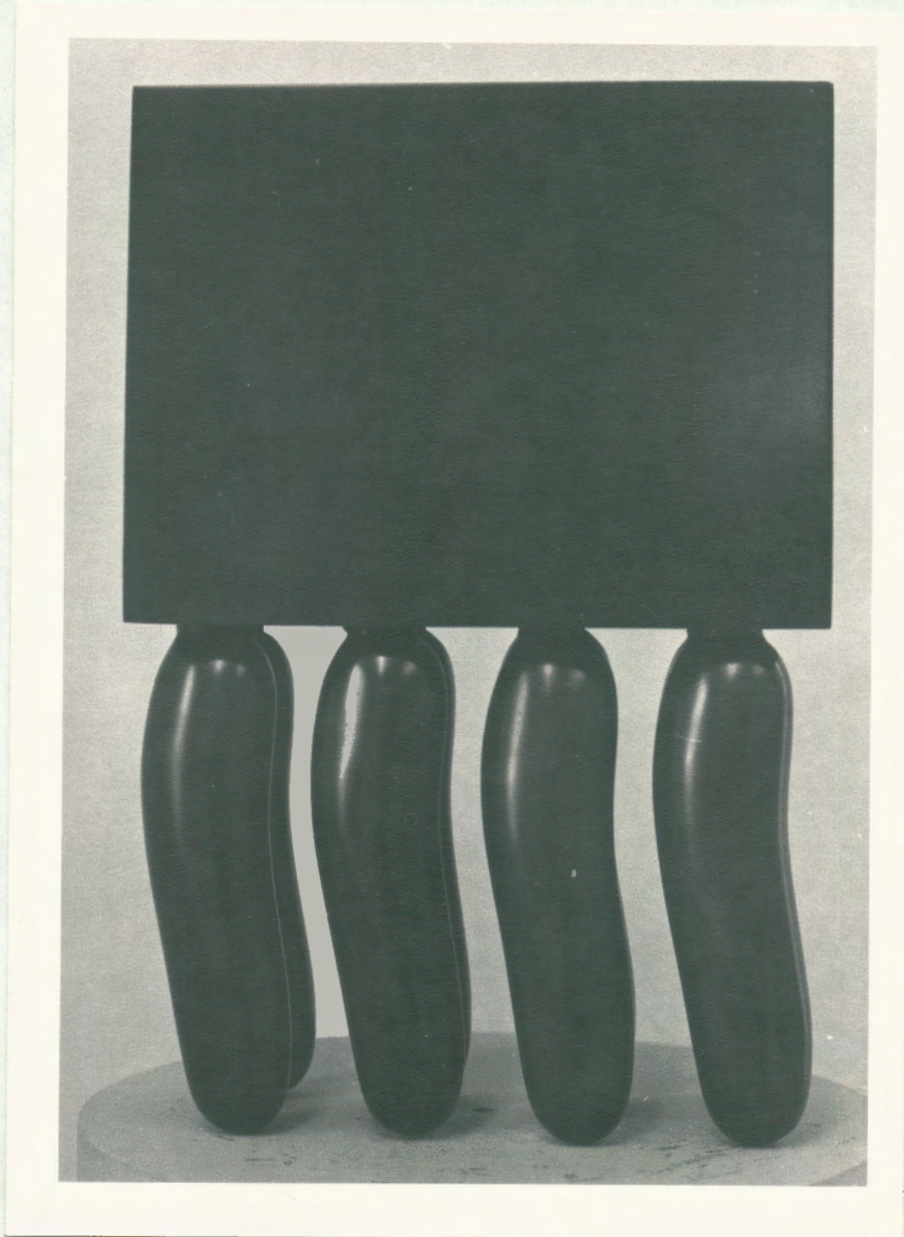


Figure 3. "UNTITLED" H. 18"



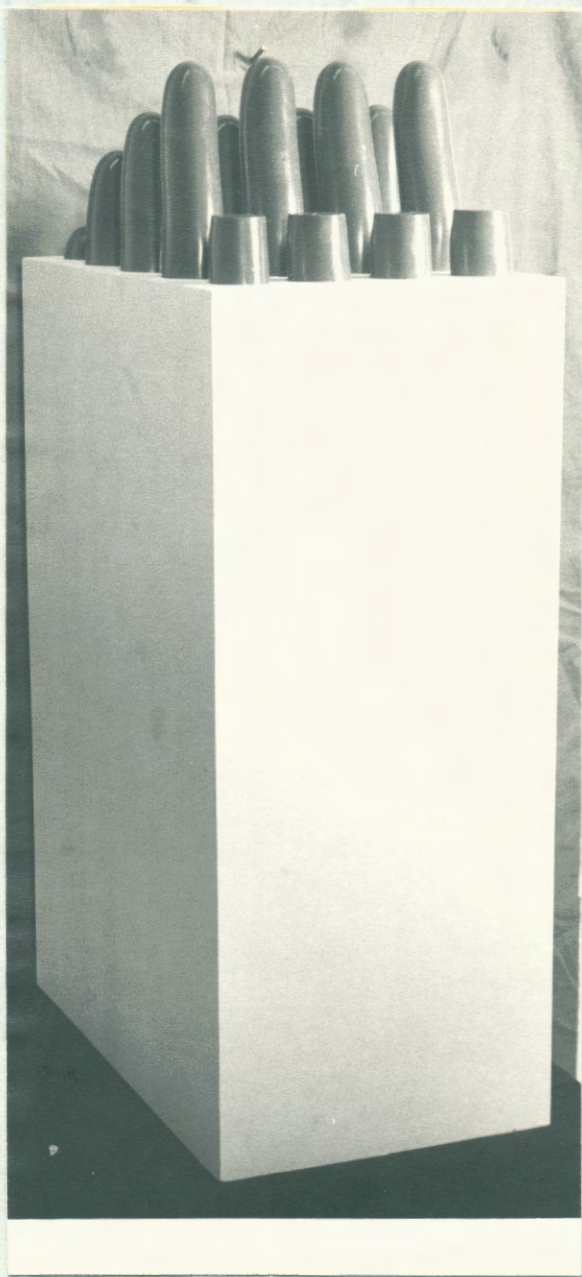


Figure 4. "TROJAN PLANT #2" H. 30"



"Wall Piece" combines both male and female elements.

Fig 5. I was most intrigued by the split skin of the flat form with its internal "tissue" bulging from the ruptured skin. In fact, this form was cast from the seat of a chair, its skin bursting from repeated use and its foam rubber "organs" pushing out.

Again, the phalli work as a group and combine with the split form to create a protective barrier around the open wound. Or, perhaps they are only waiting like the sea anemone or venus fly-trap to close on the unwary victim drawn to its succulent folds.

While working on the previous pieces I became interested in the rough wax phalli as they came from the plaster mold. As the wax is poured in and out of the mold, a wax residue forms around the opening that suggests some kind of mouth. By further applying hot wax to this shape, I created a series of succulent orifices attached to rather warty, tubular bodies.

Fig 6. This creature has no eyes, as its *raison d'etre* is concentrated in the mouth, like the young of many species or certain animals that live in darkness. I felt this would make an appropriate "Creature of the Month" for those who like an out of the ordinary gift. The boxed creatures have eaten through their packing material and are now seeking more food.



Figure 5. "WALL PIECE" H. 20"

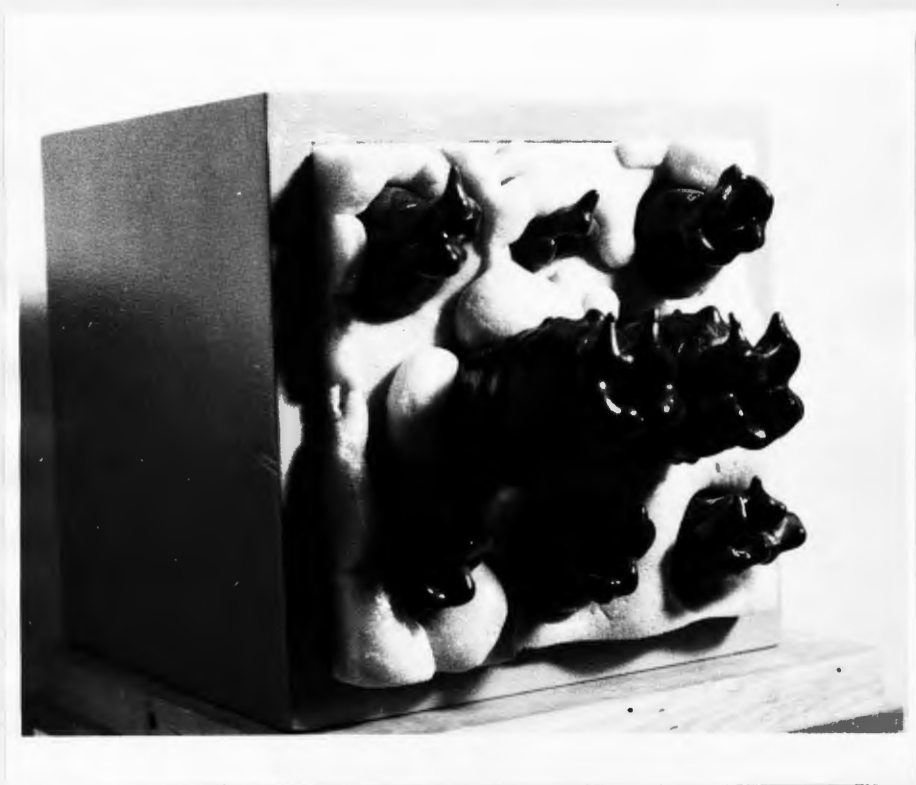


Figure 6. "CREATURE OF THE MONTH" H. 12"

In "Night Runner" I combined the aspects of hard edge solids and serpentine biomorphic forms into a single element. Fig 7. The top and bottom surfaces are a single continuous plane cut horizontally and folded vertically. The sides, then, fill in between the two surfaces as planes that are cut in the vertical and folded horizontally. Although the model was originally done in plaster, this piece would lend itself to forming in sheet metal since all surfaces are simple curves. It resembles a sinuous wedge, knifing its way through space - a hybrid of geometry and biology.

Several wax models were made of the basic "Night Runner" form. These were then cut and the segments cast and reassembled in "langue a langue". Fig 8. Returning to an erotic theme, I was intrigued with these head-like forms. They are blind and a sickly beige. Since they are immobile on their round bases, they reach out to each other with their tongues. Their total being and desire is concentrated in this sanguine organ as they span the distance between them. The remaining space becomes charged with the energy of their effort.

During the time the preceding works were being done, I continued to produce a few pieces using the creative-intuitive approach - not wanting to lose touch with this method or the forms associated with it.



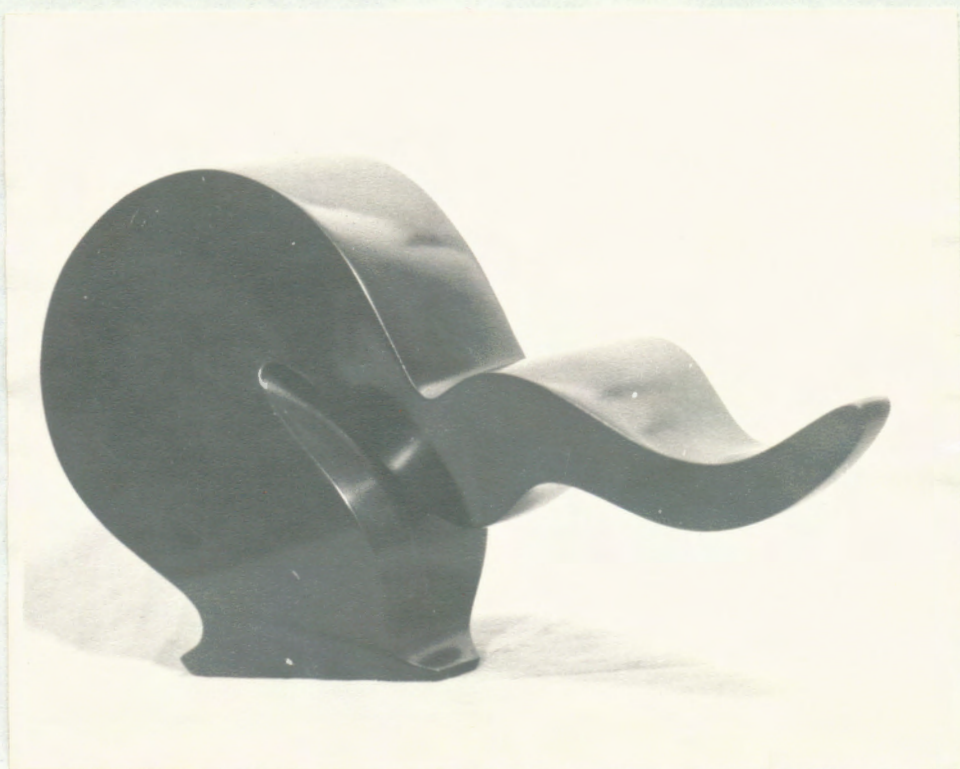


Figure 7. "NIGHT RUNNER" H. 7"



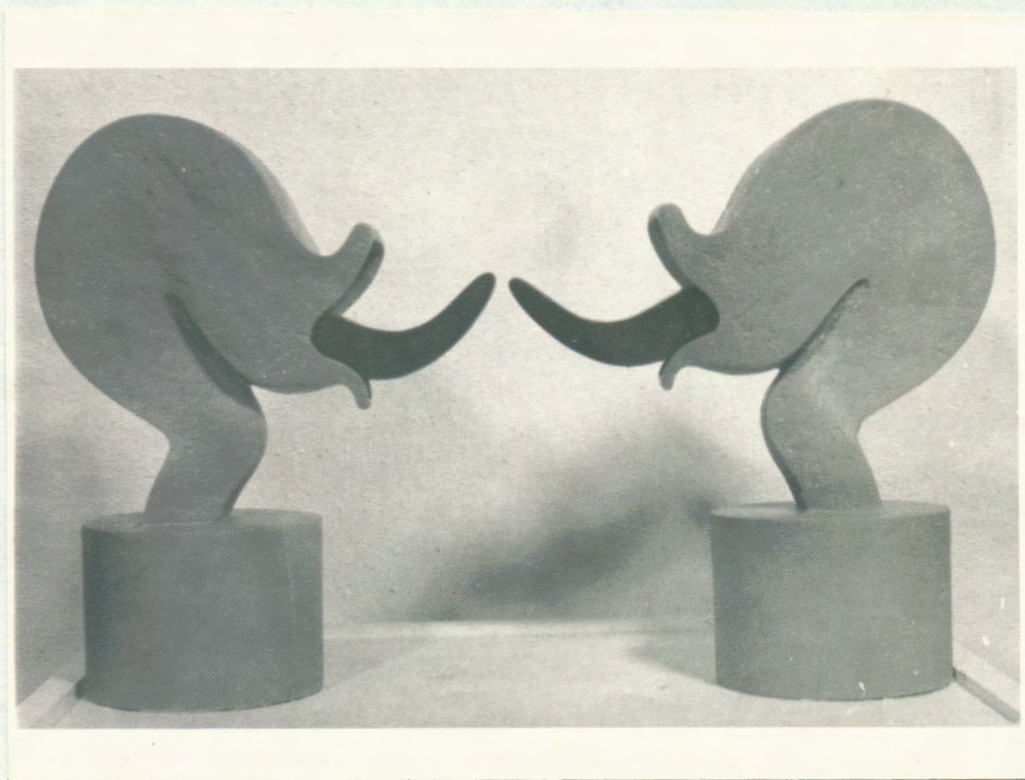


Figure 8. "LANGUE A LANGUE" H. 12"

The remaining three sculptures were done in this manner.

I started "Brain Child" with a general head form in mind. Fig 9. As the forms took shape, I was reminded of the brain, and shaped and textured forms to enhance this effect. The color was chosen with pale organs in mind, particularly that of tripe.

A small pencil sketch preceded the start of "Aquatic Form". Fig 10. The original concept involved a creature form entwined and crawling out on its roost. Later, as the forms were resolved, the creature became skewered on a shaft, and took on an aquatic nature. A blue-green color was used to emphasize its origin in the sea. The base was designed to bring the piece to viewing level, like a specimen on display, however, I feel the stand is too overpowering for the piece and should be rebuilt using a less obtrusive material - such as chrome steel tubing.

"Blood Shoot" started with the dark upper form cast separately as a piece in itself, however, I was not really satisfied with the way in which it ended at its base. It has a definite upward thrust so I felt it would function naturally as a growth form. Therefore, I embedded its base in the white - "planted" it so it could sprout. Fig 11. And this is what it is doing - bursting forth out of the confining white solid, thrusting and swelling, a turgid, blood-red

mass of fertility.



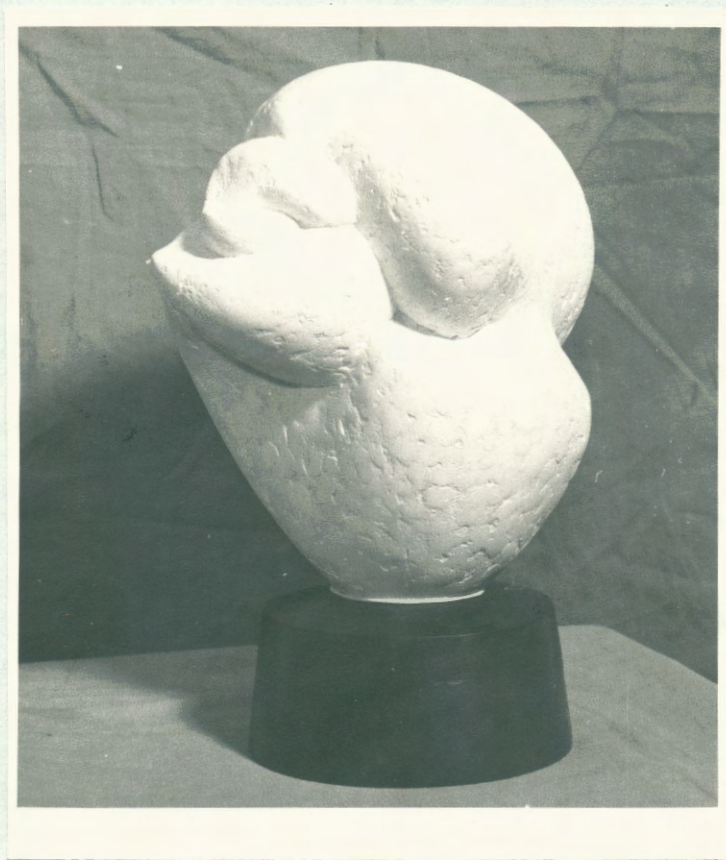


Figure 9. "BRAIN CHILD" H. 14"



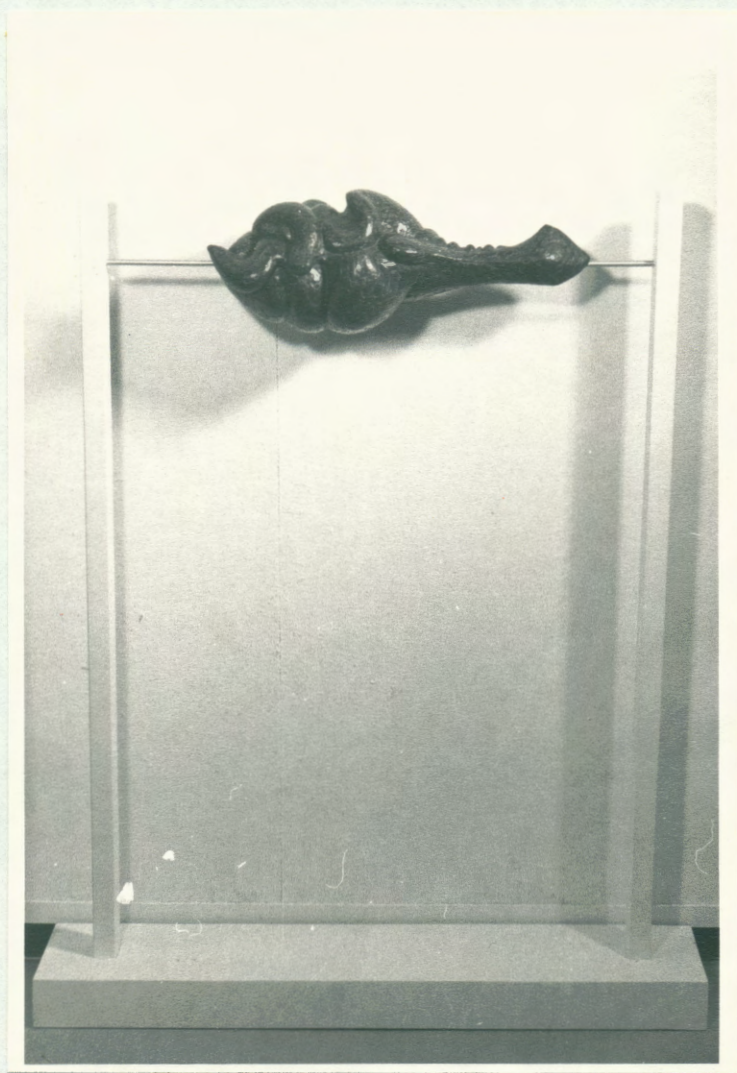


Figure 10. "AQUATIC FORM" H. 50"



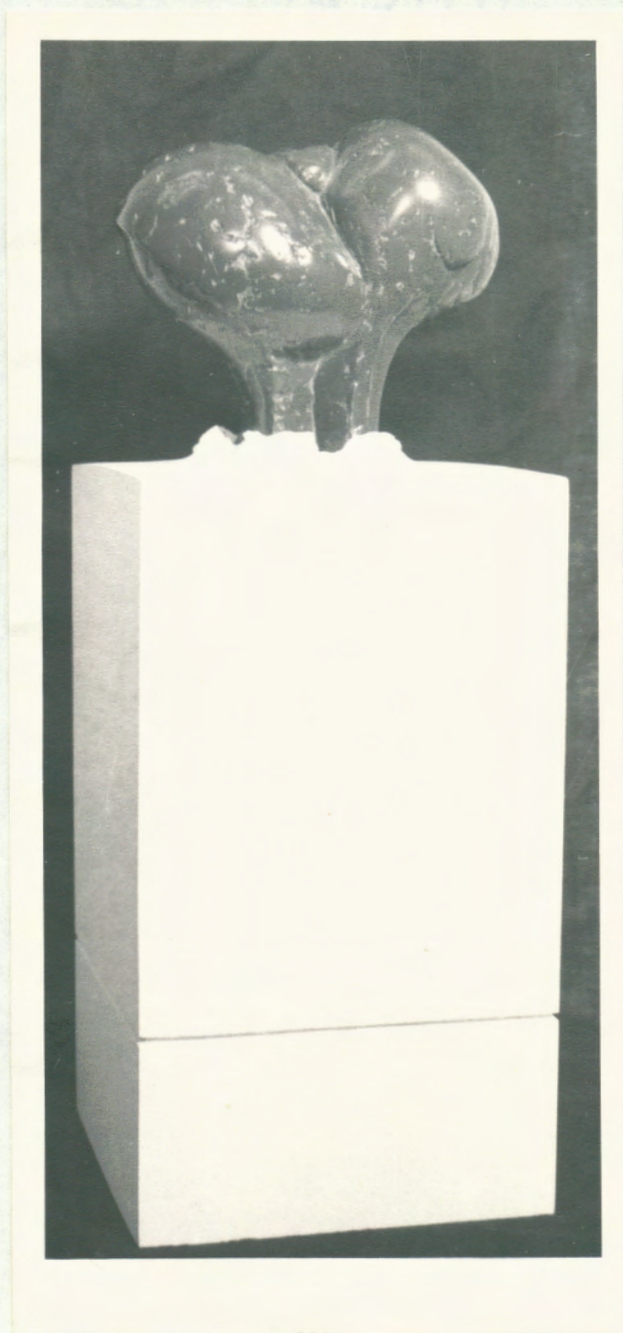


Figure 11. "BLOOD SHOOT" H. 14"

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

#### IV THE MEDIUM

Polyester resin is a versatile medium for use in sculpture. It is relatively strong and may be reinforced for additional strength. Any color can be mixed and may vary from transparent to opaque. It is reasonably light, and has good bonding qualities with other materials. It also repairs, patches, and finishes easily; and is relatively inexpensive and requires a minimum of tools and equipment.

The only real drawback is its toxicity, so use of safety equipment is essential.

#### IV THE METHODS

The conceptual-design approach naturally results in a different flavored sculpture than the creative-intuitive. Having used them both, I feel either can result in a viable art. And, of course they are not mutually exclusive - just as the intellectual and spiritual are not exclusive in the human situation.

In my own work, I will be using these methods more on an integrated basis - trying to find that balance between the mind and the spirit. This change in working

attitude is probably the major result of my thesis project-like the alchemist who, as the result of changing matter, becomes changed himself.

#### IV THE SCULPTURES

Concerning the sculptures themselves, I really have little to add. Looking back, it is interesting to see the way the work progressed and the way one piece led to another. New ideas came from each piece as well as from the techniques used in making the piece. I am now left with more ideas, skills, and techniques than when I began. Once born, creativity nurtures itself.